

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE J. LYNN HELMS, FEDERAL AVIATION
ADMINISTRATOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND
TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, CONCERNING AIR
CARRIER INSPECTOR STAFFING. NOVEMBER 10, 1983.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here to discuss FAA's air carrier inspector staffing. I understand that the Subcommittee has a number of concerns regarding this area, and I welcome the opportunity to address those concerns. I would like to begin by giving you an overview of how I believe the agency must manage its workload to accomplish its safety mission now and in the future, and then focus specifically on the inspector staffing area.

Shortly after I came to the FAA in 1981, it became apparent to me that the single most significant challenge facing the agency was the expected doubling of the number of active aircraft in the nation's airspace over the next decade. Our task was to determine how the agency could meet its safety responsibilities in the face of this increased aviation activity. One fact was clear--the agency was not going to be able to do this by doubling its workforce. We simply cannot grow as fast as aviation is going to grow. I determined that we needed to make our operations more efficient and productive. My approach to this was the same as the private sector has been doing for years--automate, consolidate, and improve management of resources. This has resulted in a number of new programs with

next ten years, and will allow us to gain economies of scale and provide better services, through specialization and real-time communication of information, to system users.

In the management area, I have implemented a Management-By-Objectives (MBO) approach throughout the agency to train managers to best maximize productivity from their staffs. In addition, I have launched an agency-wide human relations campaign to ensure that the focus on automation and management of resources does not cause us to lose sight of the individual employees--the single most valuable resource the FAA has. Ensuring that the transition to new systems is done with an understanding of the impact it has on the workers will help to alleviate problems which employees otherwise might have in adapting to new systems. I want all our employees to be a part of the restructuring of the FAA--to realize that they will not lose their jobs as a result of automation, consolidation, or management initiatives, but rather that their jobs will become more interesting and they can be more productive as automation can take over some of the more routine tasks.

Having outlined the basic thrust of my agency-wide initiatives, Mr. Chairman, I would now like to show you how I have applied these to our air carrier inspection operations.

installation by the end of next year. Thus, we have already begun to realize the benefits of this program, and even greater increases in inspector productivity should occur next year.

As in other FAA activities, I have found that the Aviation Standards functions could be performed more efficiently through a consolidation of facilities in the field. The historic alignment of district offices into General Aviation District Offices (GADO's) and Air Carrier District Offices (ACDO's) has resulted in inefficiencies. This has been exacerbated by the increased activity of commuters, and the development of some commuters into larger air carrier operations. Old distinctions in terms of equipment used have become blurred, and it is evident that the cross-utilization of air carrier and general aviation personnel will result in greater efficiencies in accomplishing the agency's mission. Therefore, cross-training of the inspector workforce is underway, and many of the offices will be combined into Flight Standards District Offices (FSDO's), which will perform the functions of both GADO's and ACDO's, while permitting a reduction in unnecessary administrative overhead.

A significant restructuring of an Aviation Standards District Office has been underway this past year in Miami. In addition to the creation of the Miami FSDO, which combined the Southern

Implementing the management by objectives approach has changed our approach to aviation standards work. Previously, our focus in air crew performance, for example, was on doing X number of en route inspections in the cockpit. Our role in these areas has been likened to that of the "cop-on-the beat." This is true in one sense--the possibility of an inspector making a random check is likely to have a deterrent effect on people who might otherwise fail to exercise proper discipline in following required procedures. There is a benefit to having a crew know that it might be subject to an inspection at any time; it keeps people on their toes. However, as you might expect, once an inspector shows up in the cockpit, the crew almost always performs its functions "by-the-book"--that is, the thousands of random inspections we carry out each year result in very few instances where we find flight crews violating the rules. Therefore, we concluded that our resources could be better put to use by focusing on ensuring that our procedures would be followed in those instances where we are not on the scene. In this regard I think it would be more helpful to view our role as a quality control function, rather than the cop-on-the beat. One method of testing quality control, is, of course, random inspections--and we will continue this to a degree. However, this is not the main way to ensure quality control. In a manufacturing concern, for example, random quality checks are used mainly to assess the quality control systems in effect

point A to point B, riding in the cockpit jumpseat of one carrier, and then I would return from B to A on a different carrier. In fact, I have done this within the last month. While we don't necessarily fill out all the forms that a flight inspector would, I can assure you that the deterrent effect is just as great when an air crew knows that the Administrator, Deputy Administrator, Associate Administrators, or other qualified FAA staffmembers might observe their procedures.

Other management initiatives have flowed from the decentralized approach we now take. Instead of detailed requirements from Washington on the number of each type of inspection to be performed by the regions, we give the regions the opportunity to maximize the productivity of their workforce, to put resources where they can do the most good. We have initiated a management training course designed specifically for aviation standards field office managers, so they will be better able to manage the resources available to them under the new approach. The curriculum has been prototyped, evaluated, and approved and the first course starts next week at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma.

We must have the capability to direct resources, within offices as well as within regions, in order to perform our work where the demand is. As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, the advent of

of the reasons I set up the aviation education program which is now underway at 13 colleges, with a curriculum endorsed by FAA. Graduates of these programs will be an excellent pool from which to draw trainees for safety inspector positions. The first graduates are expected in the next year or two. I believe this will, in large part, take care of our long-term needs.

For the short-term, if an unanticipated level of attrition were to occur, we have a relatively large pool of individuals available who are uniquely qualified to serve as air carrier inspectors--furloughed pilots who are now employed by FAA as air traffic assistants. These individuals, because of their familiarity with air carrier practices as well as the air traffic control system, would be capable of performing as inspectors in a relatively short time frame. I assure you that I would draw upon this resource only if I were convinced that the air traffic control system rebuilding effort would not be compromised.

At this point, it is not at all clear that such steps will be needed. Apart from the potential replacement of inspectors who may retire, I do not anticipate the need for additional staffing in this area. Our data indicates that authorized air carrier operations and airworthiness inspector positions

an inspector on every other plane that carrier put in the air. We likewise increased our surveillance of that carrier's maintenance and other operations. Our forthcoming field modernization/ASAS program should improve our capabilities in this regard by flagging possible trends even earlier than we can now detect them. In short, I have complete confidence that our aviation standards functions will continue to improve and promote even greater levels of safety in aviation.

That concludes my prepared statement, Mr. Chairman. At this time, we would be pleased to respond to your questions.